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LENS 2

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Reader Response – Stargirl

It is said in *Pleasures of Children’s Literature* that children may miss a text’s complexities due to the children’s lack of thinking development. They may not be developed enough to read and comprehend the complexities and hidden themes and meanings of a book. Reading Stargirl as a child and reading it now as an adult, I found myself having different reactions to the book. Though my thoughts on the book were mostly positive, I think more now about main concepts of the book, like the recurring theme of individuality, the changes, or lack thereof, of the characters throughout the book, and the repetitive bullying during the course of the book. When I read it as a child, my only reflections were those of wanting a rat and porcupine neckties. I must admit that I am a proud owner of a ukulele thanks to this book, thus proving what an effect books have on children.

As a child, the book appealed to my imagination as I tried to picture this sandy-haired girl in ridiculous clothing running around a lunchroom singing happy birthday to students that she barely knew. Her individuality was inspiring and is a good lesson to the young, moldable minds of children. It relates to in school when a new student came and everyone thought they were different. They judged before they even knew the student, like the students labeled Stargirl as weird when they didn’t know about all of the selfless things she did on a daily basis. The book overall is a lesson in individuality as well as a lesson in accepting others for who they are. There’s also the theme of popularity and fitting in with “them”. This can be very relatable to school-aged children (especially middle and high school), as it is a worldwide concept in schools, to be popular and do/wear what the popular kids do.

As an adult reading the book, the inspiring individuality theme still lingers, but now I could see the changes the characters go through as the book goes on, like Leo’s change in attitude towards Stargirl. Another item in the book that I never noticed as a child reader was how much bullying went on within the book, mostly all toward Stargirl. As I read, I found at least six bullying instances, including tomato throwing, a ‘rat-dropping’ threat, and a mass shunning. Bullying is an extremely serious topic for students, educators, and parents alike. The types of bullying that went on in the book (aside from the ‘rat dropping’ threat) were very similar to the bullying acts that went on in my high school, and in most high schools in these days.

Work Cited:

Perry Nodelman, Mavis Reimer. The Pleasures of Children’s Literature. Pearson. 2003. P.100-101.